Mr. Javed Ahmad Ghamidi vs. Ali Sina Part 4

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi vs. Ali Sina

From: **khalid zaheer**

To: **faithfreedom2 at gmail.com**

Date: **Sep 27, 2006 11:23 PM**

Subject: **Mr Ghamidi's Response**

Dear Mr Ali Sina

I don't want to waste your time and that of the visitors of your site by presenting apologies and excuses for being late in the response. I hope and pray that the future responses wouldn't be delayed by as long a duration as the one this message has taken.

I must clarify, by way of a disclaimer, that, now that myself and Mr Javed Ahmad Ghamidi are living in two different cities, at least temporarily, what I am writing is in consultation with him on the basis of a telephonic conversation. I am taking the liberty of writing a much briefer message than what it should have been if I were to mention everything he had suggested. The reason why I am doing so is that I personally believe that relatively brief messages help in attracting a larger readership than the longer ones. So, for instance, whereas Mr Ghamidi would have liked me to quote ten examples to prove a point, I would, for the sake of brevity, confine myself to two. However, if you would so demand, I would go for the longer versions of responses too.

Having said that, here are the responses to the, basically, two problems you've raised on Qur'anic teachings:

1) As for the problems of understanding in the Qur'anic description of intercession in the life hereafter, you've agreed in your message that if that understanding was to remain confined to what is mentioned in the following Qur'anic verse, it would be reasonable and logically acceptable:

"[A reward] from the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them; the most Gracious – there is no one who has the authority to

speak on His behalf. [It will happen] on the Day when Gabriel and the angels will stand arrayed [before Him]. [It will be the Day] when only they will speak whom the most Gracious allows and who speak the truth." (97:37-38)

We believe that what the rest of the Qur'an says is consistent with the above statement. The following explanation is an attempt to clarify position on the issue: There can be three categories of individuals from the point of view of their attitude and performance in the trial of this worldly life: the good performers who would succeed in the next life on the merit of their own deeds; the criminally inclined, obstinate individuals who wouldn't deserve any mercy from the Almighty; and the in-between performers who mix good deeds with bad ones but nonetheless are not obstinate transgressors. While the first category wouldn't need any intercession, the second category wouldn't deserve one. Intercession would only be needed by, and allowed to, people belonging to the third category.

In our worldly life, we too tend to make a distinction on the basis of attitude while dealing with people who do things that are wrong. An employee who is not extremely efficient but is not seen to be disloyal to the organization gets, or deserves to get, a treatment which is different from the one meted out to the one who is both inefficient and disloyal. Likewise is what God Almighty is going to do in the next life: His less-efficient-but-loyal servants would receive His mercy, albeit through the agency of intercession. The disloyal criminals would deserve no mercy.

Intercession would be used as a mode of applying God's mercy for the less-efficient-but-loyal servants for two reasons: The treatment meted out to them and the high performers should remain distinct and the highest performing servants should get the additional reward of getting the honour of successfully interceding for some other people. Indeed this process of intercession would not violate the basic principle outlined in the above-quoted verse: "[It will be the Day] when only they will speak whom the most Gracious allows and who speak the truth." (97:37-38) In other words, the Almighty would Himself identify the people who would be allowed to intercede and the ones they would be allowed to intercede for. In the process of intercession, they would not speak anything but the truth. Wherever the Qur'an talks about intercession, it does so within the parameters of the above-stated principle.

As for the mention of intercession in ahadith, we have already stated that the only two reliable sources of knowledge of Islam are Qur'an and sunnah, While the Qur'an is the book of God that was preserved through the process of memorizing from the first generation onwards in a way that its originality is beyond doubt, similar is the case of sunnah, the religious practices of the prophet-- in fact the earlier prophets too -- that he

performed in the presence of his companions who emulated him even after his death and the next generations followed suit. The authenticity of originality of these sunnah practices -- like for example, prayers, pilgrimage, burial rites etc. -- are at par with the Qur'an. Both have been passed on from generation to another in accordance with God's scheme to preserve the last religion revealed by Him.

The case of ahadith is not the same. These reports about the prophet's life are a record of what he did, said, or what happened during his lifetime, compiled by individuals at their own initiative. Unlike the Qur'an and sunnah, the contents of ahadith do not contain a completely authentic description of the prophet's mission. There could be both inadvertent errors in the hadith literature as well as mentions that resulted out of deliberate attempts at distorting the true picture of Islam. The important thing is that while the Qur'an and sunnah are end result of the God-ordained arrangement, ahadith are the result of human effort. We therefore don't take the responsibility of defending what is mentioned in this literature.

2) The other problem you have pointed out in the Qur'an is regarding the inconsistent use of pronouns for God. To understand why it has so happened, one must appreciate that the Qur'an is not just a bland piece prose in Arabic that was revealed to hand down some instructions to the prophet. It is a masterpiece of Arabic literature. Like other literary masterpieces, the use of pronouns in the Qur'an, as indeed in the case of many other aspects of its styles of presentation, should be viewed from that perspective. The use of third person pronoun by an author may be considered an error by a reader not fully conversant with literary writings. To someone who knows the subtle delicacies presentations that are expressed in the highest level of literary taste, usage of the same pronoun can raise that work from the level of ordinary prose to a much higher level of literary taste. The Qur'an was revealed not just to influence the ordinary people of the Arabian society; it had come to have a deep impact on the elite of the society who wouldn't have been impressed by a message that expressed itself in a simple, dull language. Thus Qur'anic style of presentation should not be critically examined from the point of view of ordinary logic. It has to be appreciated from the standpoint of the richness of its literary stature.

Zamakhshari, a twelfth century exegete, whose literary appreciation of the Qur'an is widely acknowledged, has given several examples of the usage of third person pronouns by the top-grade classical poets of the Arabian society. If needed, I will quote them. The Qur'an had not just to match them in the beauty of their literary style. It had to outperform them to reach the hearts of the elite class and, through them, the ordinary people as well. It shouldn't come as a surprise then that God uses He and Him for

Himself on several occasions. In case such usage is to be criticized, it should be done on the parameters of literary appreciation of the classical Arabic.

Just to help appreciate our point, I am mentioning a couplet each from Iqbal and Ghalib, the two most outstanding Urdu poets of the Indian subcontinent. The translations are my own:

Urdu:
Iqbal bara ubdaishak hay man baatoon main moh laita hay
Guftar ka who ghazi to bana, kirdar ka ghazi ban na saka

Iqbal is a great sermonizer: He wins the hearts through what he says
Despite winning the verbal battle, he couldn't win the battle of character

Urdu:
Atay hain ghaib say yeh mazamin khyal main
Ghalib sareere khama-e naway-e saroosh hay

Ideas come to him from the heavens
Ghalib is only the scribe of the voices of angels

In both cases, the great poets are using third person pronouns for themselves. Anyone who would accuse them of committing logical error in presentation would attract the criticism that he is devoid of a taste for appreciation of literary masterpieces. Likewise is true for the Qur'an.

Khalid Zaheer